The Global Teenager

A Whole Earth Catalog

Within the next five years one half of the humans on earth will be under the age of 20. These billions of teenagers will increasingly listen to the same popular music, see the same movies and tv shows, study the same science, and have the same heroes. They are interconnected by a single world financial system, by a single world ecology that is biting back, by an international marketplace that is depending on them to be consumers for a planetary economy, and by a 24-hour communications circuit that is leaving no part of their world unplugged. They are global in numbers and perspective.

Last time teenagers drove a modern culture, we had the 60s. In the 90s teenagers could be behind the wheel again, and they'll be driving a planet-wide contraption.

This book looks into the unexamined world of the global teenager, and then, through the eyes of global teenagers themselves, looks out at the world. Teenagers of any sort are rarely asked what they think; teenagers in developing are never asked. This book asks teenagers living along the edges of the new planetary culture what kind of world they will be building us. It explores the future of the Earth by exploring the global teenager experience.

Its audience is not specifically teenagers. There is a tremendous interest in international culture among in what could only be called mainstream culture. We have counted over 1,000 recently started student exchange groups trading American and Russian students alone. Japan's culture is a constant topic of conversation in newspapers and TV. China is deluged with thousands of stampeding American visitors (and businessmen), while nearly everyone is listening to South African influenced music, savoring Thai food, nodding to Oriental religious wisdom. It is true that "international news" generates nothing but yawns for most people; what educated American readers want, and what *The Global Teenager* provides, is a lense to focus on the pertinent trends in other cultures through the amazing lives of its most important class -- the generation coming of age, and in so focusing, also filter out the endless static of meaningless news snippets. What *The Global Teenager* brings to

Americans fascinated with events in Russia, or the success of Japan, is an intimate viewing point to follow youth as they absorb global culture and return ripples of great international influence that flow under our babbling newspaper headlines to shape our own lives.

The planetary teenager will inform and transform the agenda of everyone of all ages. They will affect the politics, environment, popular culture, and creative mind of not only a particular local country but all local countries, North America included. This book brings into focus a multi-facet portrait of global teenagers -- an anthropological overview of their common concerns, lifestyles and goals. It will have hard facts, statistics useful to those looking for them, and untold stories of world-wide young's own way of reconciling the past and future.

In style, *The Global Teenager Experience* would be punky, unusually informative and fun. It will be very graphic, with *People*-sized features. Its content would be first-hand, real and passionate. Its significance would be practical and handy. Its impression would be lively and large.

In addition to a book, we are exploring arrangements for a *Global Teenager* public-TV special or mini-series. This would involve a Hollywood star and international rock star/composer as narrators, and be backed by global corporate sponsors. Our initial contacts have met with overwhelming enthusiasm for the projects. Included in the spin-offs is a musical album of the sound-track of the show. As we conceive of it, the book would be a companion to these media, but with far deeper and original content .

The book would include the following types of material (some in hand already):

A deep survey of World Beat music, the music the world's kids are listening to.

- Reviews of particular albums, and how-to-get them
- Mail order catalogs of world wide music
- The state of rock'n'roll in Russia and Eastern Europe (what I've jokingly been calling Commie PunkRock)
- The role of underground World Beat music in African and Caribbean revolutions

Passionate Literature

- What authors are global teenagers reading passionately?
- Short excerpts in translation for best examples
- Access to books of international authors in translation

A Day in the Life of a Global Teenager

- Interview survey conducted by overseas readers of WER, asking teenagers in their host country. Similar set of questions asked in every country. What do you do with your money? What do you think you'll be doing in ten years? Where does your drinking water come from? Etc.
- The Question Box. An experiment conducted in the Philippines. A teenage village boy is given a tape recorder and told to ask it all his questions in the next week. A transcript reveals the evolution of his questions as he asks deeper and deeper ones.
- A van of Japanese boys tour the US. They record all their questions, like why is a nickle larger than a dime?
- Anthropological analysis of current teenager boom
- Teenage urban legends globally

Picking up global tv

- Which channels to tune to watch Russian news, South American soap operas, and European sports
- The best thing on tv -- the commercials -- a language understood everywhere. Watching the best commercials of the world.

The dynamics of international fashion

- How youth fashions circulate around the world

International food culture

- Mail order sources for terribly authentic ethnic foods
- How far in the world can you get just living on MacDonalds (pretty far)
- Non-western international fast foods chain hits
- Street foods

News of the tribe

- Short survey of native "underground" publications around the world

- International newspapers in English. How to scan or get here. Evaluations of the best.
- International radio news broadcasts in English. " " " .
- The best international news magazines in English.
- The other ways global teenagers get their news
- Mambo Gambi -- clippings from local newspapers (personal ads in India, village reports from Kenya, etc.)

World Government

- Outline of present proposals to create a more active world government. Arguments against having a world government
- What European kids think about the coming "United States of Europe" in 1992
- Devolution -- bioregional culture and the youth movement to create regional cultures in Europe, Russia, and elsewhere

Factory Kids (usually factory girls)

- The subculture of young factory workers who assemble most of the consumer products of the world, particularly in Asia.
- Working for Gaia, Inc., a world multinational. View from the corporation, view from the youth.

School

- Transcripts of various global teenager's coursework. What they study

Access to and understanding of international films on video.

- Some guidance for venturing into international film watching; suggested titles
- Where and how to rent by mail
- What most of the teenagers in the world watch -- Hindi musicals, Hong Kong action flicks, and American Hollywood. How the first two work.

Intercultural exchange

- Intercultural understanding training aids. Games and publications.
- How to send or receive a foreign exchange student
- How to go on a Russian cultural exchange
- Survey of summer abroad programs
- Doing an overseas home and house swap
- Pen pal programs
- Student travel tips

Threading through this quilt of energetic glimpses would be the narratives of one or two world class essayists that we would send around the world to hot spots where global teenage culture is fiercest. There would also be material gathered by a planetary network of Whole Earth readers, ex-Peace Corp members, and Third World journalists who would be interviewing teenagers on their home turf.

The book's size could be either 8 1/2 x 11 (Fringes) or 9 1/2 x 12 (Signal). 228 pages seems about right. Because of the great amount of research, this one would need to be made after *The Restoration*, perhaps published in late 1990. Cost $?????.